

# **URBAN GOVERNANCE IN SUB SAHARAN AFRICA: AN EVALUATION OF ITS EFFECTIVENESS FOR SUSTAINABILITY IN AKURE, ONDO STATE, NIGERIA**

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## **Abstract**

This paper explores governance at the local level in Nigeria drawing from the study of the situation in Akure South Local Government Area of Ondo State. The essence is to evaluate urban governance with a view to determining its effectiveness for sustainability. It discusses challenges to good urban governance in the study area and suggests how governance at this level can be improved upon to ensure sustainable urban development in Nigeria. The data used in the study were derived from in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in urban affairs as well as Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with representatives of major groups in the city. This was complimented by data from secondary sources including government publications. The research reveals the nuanced understanding of the role of local government in propelling grassroots development in the area. The research is indicative of the legal, administrative and technical deficiencies of urban government in promoting development at local level in Nigeria. The local government in the area has abdicated its responsibility to the state government. This portends grave consequences for sustainable development. Urban governance in the area lacks the basic features of sustainable city development. This cannot be expected to ensure the welfare of the residents of the city particularly the poor. It is also ineffective and inequitable to promote the rule of law. There is

therefore an urgent need to invigorate and improve local governance by strengthening institutional and capacity development at this level of governance.

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**Keywords :** Good urban governance, local administration, sustainable urban development, effective urban governance

## **Introduction**

Good urban governance has been identified as indispensable or necessary to achieve sustainable development in contemporary times particularly in the developing world context. Good governance assures that political, social and economic priorities are based on broad consensus in society and that the voices of the poorest and the most vulnerable are heard in decision-making over the allocation of development resources. This was why the UN-HABITAT in collaboration with the Government of Nigeria launched the good urban governance (GUG) campaign in Nigeria in April 2001 as part of its advocacy role to promote the Habitat Agenda, and in particular, the goal of achieving sustainable human settlements development and management in a rapidly urbanizing world. Besides, with more and more people preferring cities as their choice of settlement, the challenge lies not in stemming this tide of migration, but in managing and governing our cities better, to improve quality of life and living standards. The rapid urbanization in developing countries particularly in sub Saharan African societies requires more proactive and efficient actions to ensure its sustainability. Therefore, developing capacity for good governance in a society has been identified as *a sine qua non* to achieving sustainable development through the elimination of poverty, and creation of enabling environment in which every member of the society can enjoy good health and creative lives. The goal of sustainability has affected all areas of human endeavors including governance at different levels. One way to achieve this is by understanding and documenting the existing situation, the institutions created over the years to manage or carry out local administration as well as practices and tools of governance at the local level. Thus, the overall goal of the study is to evaluate governance in Akure South Local Government with a view to understanding existing urban governance practices, deficiencies and to suggest how this can be improved upon to promote sustainable development in Nigeria.

## **Conceptual Clarifications**

UNDP defines governance as processes, regulations or the results of interactions between the legislative and executive governments, the civil society, the judiciary, and the people' (UNDP 1997). It is the system of values, policies and institutions by which a society

manages its economic, political and social affairs through interactions within and among the state, civil society and private sector. It is the way a society organizes itself to make and implement decisions achieving mutual understanding, agreement and action. It has also been described as the mechanisms and processes for citizens and groups to articulate their interests mediate their differences and exercise their legal rights and obligations. The rules, institutions and practices set limits and provide incentives for individuals, organizations and firms. Governance means a more cooperative way of government, where state and non-state institution, public and private actors, take part and often cooperate in public policy formulation and implementation (Mayntz, 2001). Governance, including its social, political and economic dimensions, operates at every level of human enterprise, be it the household, village, municipality, nation, region or globally. (UNDP Strategy Note on Governance for Human development, 2000) . Good Urban Governance focuses on the entrenchment and pursuit of certain principles and ideals in the city administration that promote inclusiveness and democratic norms in decision making with the view to enhancing the citizen well-being.

From the above the term “urban governance” implies a greater diversity in organization of services, a greater variety of actors and stakeholders, and a greater flexibility in the relationship between municipalities and their citizens. The major theme of urban governance that have been generally agreed on being the capacity dimension (involving services) the financial dimension ( with focus on generation of local revenues), the diversity dimension (where issues of fragmentation and inequality are central) the security dimension, and the authority dimension ( looking at the distribution and allocation of power). This five major themes will be adopted as the basis for assessing good urban governance in the study area.

The task Force on improving the lives of slum dwellers stresses in addition to other principles subscribed to by community of nations: subsidiarity, civic engagement and citizenship, and security of individuals and their living environments Thus taken together according to the task force, these attributes define governance that is close to all citizens, promotes the active participation of all in the city’s political life and in decisions that affect them, and ensures living conditions for all, secured by law, that guarantee a safe, pleasant, humane, and livable environment (Millennium Project, 2005). Good urban governance means improving the organization of the urban poor as equal partners in urban political and economic life, including budgeting decisions, financing practices, and the participatory upgrading, planning, and design of basic public services (Millennium Project, 2005).

Satterthwaite (2009), identified five aspects of or issue that creates and sustains ‘good governance’. These are elected city governments; city governments with resources and powers to allow them to act (often linked to decentralization); formal and informal avenues to allow civil society to influence what city governments do and hold them to account; organized urban poor groups that can work at the level of the city that are able and willing to interact with city government and to whom city government is prepared to listen to; and a rule of law not too based against low-income groups (Satterthwaite, 2009).

Good Governance is pioneered by UNDP (UNDP 1997) and was initially measured by nine elements, principles and themes, which include rule of law, transparency, responsiveness, consensus orientation, equity, effectiveness and efficiency, accountability, strategic vision and participation. Good governance principles have been applied to different tiers of government such as national, regional (provincial) and at local level. Good Governance is closely linked with sustainable human development (UNDP 1994). Therefore, developing the capacity for good governance in a society is *sine qua non* to be achieved suitable development, through the elimination of poverty, and creation of enabling environment in which every member of the society can enjoy long, healthy and creative lives. Good governance requires not only effective and accountable institutions but also a means through which to ensure an open and accountable relationship between the state and civil society (Islam and Khan, 1970). UN Habitat has been in the vanguard of promoting Good Urban Governance at the local (city) level. The nine governance principles earlier adopted to measure good governance were reviewed and customized to urban administrative level during the UN inter-agency meeting in June 2001 where the five principles for measuring good urban governance were adopted.

### **Study Area and Methods**

Akure the setting for this study is the headquarters of Akure South Local Government Area (ASLGA) of Ondo State of Nigeria. Ondo state is one of the 36 states of Nigeria and is located in the southwestern part of Nigeria. There are 18 local government Areas in the state. The local government area is located in the Ondo central senatorial district of the state. Akure South Local Government council (ASLGC) was created in 1976 and has as its headquarters Akure which also double as the capital city of Ondo state. The population of the local government according to the 2006 population census figures is 353,211. The council is divided into 11 political wards and 302 polling booths (Facts and figures on Ondo State, 2010). The city accounts for nine out of the eleven political wards that made up the local government.

The methodology utilized in the study embrace in-depth interviews of key officials of the Local government, selected residents of the city and representatives of major groups in the city. The following key staffers of the council were interviewed to elicit information from them: The Chairman, Director of Local Government Administration, Head of Personnel Management (HPM), Internal Auditor and Treasurer among others. Other people knowledge in local government administration including the Permanent Secretary Local Government Service Commission was interviewed to throw more light on Local administration in the area. In addition, to face-to-face interview, data were also obtained through Focus Group Discussions (FGDs that took place on 7<sup>th</sup> of October, 2010 at the council Chamber of the LGA. In Akure South LGA, there are 6 police Divisions, the six were visited and the DPOs or their designated Officers interviewed. This was achieved after a signal was sent from the Commissioner of Police. Data on crime rate in the LGA for the last three years were obtained from the Police Headquarters, Akure. The qualitative data as indicated above were generated through in-depth interviews with key stakeholders in city affairs in the study area. NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Community Development organizations, organized groups and societies including market women, Drivers' unions etc were also be consulted as key informants to provide information on the performance of officials charged with the responsibility of administering city affairs as well as how to achieve good urban governance in the area. Secondary data sources embraces extraction of essential data from published sources including publications of Research and statistics Department of Ministry of Finance and Planning, Local Government Service Commission, Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development; National Population Commission (NPC); Independent Electoral Commission of Nigeria (INEC); State Independent Electoral Commission, Akure

### **Urban Governance in Akure**

To be able to conduct adequate evaluation of urban governance in the area, it is essential to document or summarize the governance structure and practices in the area during the study. Indeed, an attempt is made here to achieve that. Nigeria is a federation consisting of 36 states and a Federal Capital territory, Abuja. The country is also divided into 774 Local Governments of which Akure South local Government is one of them. Before the 1976 Local Government Reform in Nigeria, several local government structures existed in the country. This was essentially because local government had become a regional or state subject under the 1951 Nigerian constitution (Mba, 1998). The situation is still maintained in the 1999 constitution of Nigeria. Under the 1999 constitution, local governments in the country are placed under the supervision of State Governments. *As will be demonstrated later this*

*significantly contributed to the low performance of local administration in the area and other parts of the country.* Local government throughout the federation did not exercise an appreciable degree of autonomy because of over concentration of power at the federal level. One of the consequences of this was that local governments had to operate under a structure that did not enhance the development of local initiative ( Egomnwan, 1984). Other consequences included highly limited financial resources as well as inadequate staffing and funding for local governments (Mba, 1998). Consequently, the effort was made to solve these issues in the 1976 Local Government Reform. Indeed, the most important issue in the 1976 Local Government Reform is that the Federal government constitutionally recognized local governments as the third tier government below the state government (MBA, 1998). With the reform, they were to have financial capacities, staffing and institutional framework to initiate and provide relevant services to their communities. Moreover, they were to have adequate resources to stimulate development at the grassroots (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976). Other objectives of the reform include enhancement of public participation at the local level, as well as, improvement of basic services and infrastructure at the local and community levels (Federal Republic of Nigeria, 1976). Since the reform came into existence, development in Nigeria shows a trend towards decentralization increased political pluralism that seeks participatory governance.

Following from the above, the responsibility for administration and management of the study area falls mainly on Akure South Local Government Council of Ondo State. The affairs of the local government area during the study were being managed by an appointed caretaker committee headed by a Chairman. Besides AKSLG, there are other institutions or agencies involved in governing different aspects of the city. The important ones are identified and briefly discussed in this section. The Ministry of Physical Planning and Urban Development is a department of the state government and it is headed by a cabinet Commissioner who is responsible to the Executive Governor of the state for the administration and management of physical Planning and urban development in the state including Akure, the study area. This ministry controls the physical development of the city approval of development plans such as layout, building plan and development guide among others. It is also responsible for monitoring and enforcing physical development activity in the city. Before the commencement of any physical development projects in the city, planning approvals must be sorted and obtained from the Ministry. Ondo State Waste Management Board, also an agency of the state government is responsible for waste collection and disposal in the city. Ondo State Property and Development Corporation is an

agency of the state with the responsibility of providing housing for the public on a commercial basis. In discharging this responsibility, the corporation have created and developed a number of estates in the city which include Ijapo, Oba ile and Oba Afunbiowo housing estates. The agency created four housing estates that are planned and managed by it. The issue of security falls within the purview of the Nigerian Police Force. In the city, there are six police divisions, each of them headed by a Divisional Police Officer(DPO). Although the DPOs are members of the Local Government Security Council, they take instruction from the State Commissioner of police, who himself is responsible to the Inspector General of police. There is also the Universal Basic Education (UBE) that controls primary education in the city.

### **Assessments of Urban Governance in the Area**

The literature indicates that good urban governance needs to combine social and economic policies that support prosperity. The study found that the local government does not have adequate social and economic policies to drive development and promote the welfare and living standard of the citizenry. All they have are ad hoc policies and programs to address specific or what they considered as pressing problems.

On adoption and availability of vision and mission statement for the local government area, the chairman argued that the council has one but this was refuted during the FGD. This assertion could not be ascertained. The vision/mission statement could not be found in and documents of the LGA such as LEEDS, land use master plan, structure plans, among others. In actual fact, no strategic plan of any type exists in the LGA. The absence of mission/vision statement and strategic plans to drive and guide development initiatives is a pointer to the ineffectiveness of the LGA. At present nothing to guide and direct government actions and activities in the city. Investigations revealed that the LGa does not have a formally adopted vision/ mission statement. This is not peculiar to this local government. Evidence from other LGAs in Nigeria revealed that the majority of them lack mission/vision statement (Falade, 2011). This is a serious problem because without an explicitly articulated vision and mission as well as clear social and economic policies to drive and focus development initiative and action, it will be difficult channel development efforts and determine changes in the development of the area. There are no targets or goals set for the city. All that is happening is for the council to pay salaries of workers and fix a few problems when they occur.

On provision and access to urban services, investigations revealed that most of the services that are expected to be made available to the resident by the LGA are not being undertaken by it. The LGC is not providing housing, water, public transport, waste disposal

and even the few ones such as education is not fully carried out by the council. Other agencies or Boards of the state are responsible for providing these services. In the performance of the constitutional function of the LGA. The constitution of the country assigned 14 functions to the local governments. Investigations revealed that three of these constitutional functions are being undertaken by the LGA, while others are partially carried out or not carried out at all. The three being performed are the establishment of home for the destitute and infirm, registration of births and death as well as provision and maintenance of adult and vocational education. These functions are performed by the state government and other agencies of government such as NPC in case of registration of births. Other functions are performed by other agencies in varying degrees.

On procedures for accessing services provided by the local government, advertisement of contracts, in radio and television as well as display on notice boards are the major means of reaching the public. In addition, no specific mechanism has been put in place for addressing public complaints. This was amply conveyed during the FGD in the LG secretariat.

Subsidiarity and autonomy of local governance in the area, the LG enjoy autonomy in the areas of rate collection, registration of marriage, collection of liquor fees, naming of streets, maintenance of markets and slaughterhouses as well as maintenance of primary school and health facilities. The LG does not enjoy autonomy in the recruitment and disciplinary of all staff. While the LG is empowered to employ and discipline junior level staff (worker on the lowest grade of GL 01 to 06), an agency of the state, the Local Government Service Commission, is charged with the responsibility of recruiting, promotion and discipline of senior staff. Besides, the state government controls the finances of the council in two ways. First, there is a Local government revenue allocation committee that is responsible for sharing money that accrues to the Local governments in the state. In the second situation, every expenditure of the LG that is above one million naira (about\$6,250) must be approved by the state government. During the FGD, it was concluded that there is undue interference or external control on the LG from higher authorities particularly the state government in managing it finances as well as who manages the affairs of the council. Lack of financial autonomy is a serious problem confronting governance at the grassroots level and this cannot make for good governance.

On resource mobilization, the LG depends almost wholly on statutory allocation from the federation account. Available records showed that the LG cannot predict how much will accrue to her from the state government and the Federation account because it depends on the



disposition of the governor and fluctuations in crude oil price in international market respectively. This is because the Nigerian economy depends on crude oil export and any fluctuations in the oil market in the international market directly affect the economy of the country including the LGs that also depends almost wholly on allocation from the federation account. Besides, what the LG receives from the monthly allocation from the federation account, what the council generates from the Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) is always very small. During the study, there were no adequate records of what the LG derived from this source in the last few years. The state government has not been remitting the share of the LG to it from the IGR accruing to the state in the last three years as required by the law of the land. This partly accounted for the inability of the LG inefficiency and ineffectiveness in meeting the needs of the residents of the city in the provision of urban facilities and services.

Field investigations revealed that the LGA lack explicitly formulated pro poor policies. Policies that have been formulated by the Federal and state governments which the LG is expected to domesticate have not been undertaken as required. However, the LG has some ad hoc programs and projects to assist select members of the area. The programs include those on economic empowerment, street children and child labor, elderly and the physically challenged. Women participation has not been institutionalized in the LG to conform with the global affirmation that seeks to allocate 35 percent position to women. In the last LG election that took place in the area in 2007, all the elected eleven councilors were men, no single woman councilor was elected. However, situation improved in 2010, out of the seven appointed caretaker members of the council in 2010, three of them (43percent) are women.

**Table 1:** Staff Nominal Roll Based on Gender as at July 2010

S/N	Department	Male	Female	Total
1	Primary Health Care	41	369	410
2	Administration	127	139	266
3	Treasury	80	156	236
4	Community Development	19	35	54
5	Agriculture	9	4	13
6	Budgeting and Planning	3	2	5
7	Works	86	11	97
	Total	365	716	1,081

**Source:** Department of Personnel Management, Akure South Local Government, 2010

For effective administration of the LGA, the LGA has seven departments. These departments as depicted in table 1 are Primary Health, Administration, Treasury, Community Development, Agriculture, Budgeting and Planning and Works, . Each of this department is headed by a career office appointed and deploy to the LGC by Ondo state Local Government Service Commission (OSLGSC), a commission whose members are appointed and controlled by the state government. However, the officers are responsible to the Chairman of the LGC through the Director of Local Government Administration (DLGA), for the day to day running of their Departments and the LG. These departments carry out different functions in the city. For instance, the Works department is responsible for construction and maintenance of local roads and buildings belonging to the LGC in the study area, primary health take care of health facility and services in the LGA including immunization among others

On participatory governance in the city, there has been no referendum on any issue or policy in the city in the last ten years. Besides, elections to elect representatives of the city to the local council are not regularly undertaken. The last LG election in the area was in December 2007. Those elected were sacked and replace with appointed caretaker committee in April 2009 by the state governor. Up this the of this study, appointed caretaker committee are still in charge of administration of the area. The implication of not conducting regular elections into the council is that it limit participatory governance and insulate the populace from partaking in decisions that affect the city. This is at variance with the principles and objectives of sustainable development that seeks to promote participatory governance. However, traditional rulers in the city are involved in decision making in the city through the Akure South Local Government Traditional Ruler's Council. The traditional Ruler's council holds meeting with the Executives of the LGA once in a month to discuss political, economic and security issues as they affect the people.

### **Constraints to Effective Urban Governance in the Study Area**

Having discussed urban governance in Akure and determined its ineffectiveness, it is necessary to identify and examine factors limiting its effectiveness in the area. One of the most important factors limiting the effectiveness of urban governance in the study area is lack of elected local /city governance. During the study, there was not in place absence of elected local government officials. What was on the ground was appointed caretaker committee by the governor of the state. They were not only appointed from members of the party of state government, they are subject to the whims and caprices of the governor rather than people.

Higher authorities' interference in the affairs of local administration. As demonstrated above, appointment, promotion and discipline of senior council officials are carried out by

Ondo State Local Government Service Commission (OSLGSC) a state government controlled commission. By this practice, the senior civil servants can decide to misbehave; all that will happen to him is to transfer him. Of course during the survey many of them were difficult to get because they seldom come to work. Besides, interference in the appointment senior staff, the state government also controls the finances of the LG. For the LG to execute any project, it must seek the approval of the state government. This slows down activity and some cases prevent the LG from meeting the needs of the people because a higher authority decides what to do and not the people.

Another major constraint to effective urban governance in the area is the existence of the Joint Revenue Allocation Board. The board which is a creation of the law of the land does not allow LGs in the state to receive their allocation directly from the federation account. Money accruing to all the LGS are first pooled together and shared among all the LGAs.

Inadequate and ineffective workforce also contributes significantly to poor urban governance in the city. As depicted in table 1, majority of the staff in the LG are in three departments of administration, primary health and treasury. More important departments to the accomplishment of the responsibility of the LG such as works and the environment are not well staffed. Urban planning and land use control and management that is critical to governing a city do not feature in the staff profile of the LG. The implication of this is that the LG is not involved in land use planning, control and administration in the area.

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

The assessment of urban governance in the study area revealed a number of fundamental issues and problems associated with urban governance. As indicated above, the LGA lacks a clear cut vision/mission to guide and direct city development initiatives and activities. Thus developmental projects are articulated and implemented in ad hoc and unorganized manner. Fundamental and constitutionally assigned responsibility to this tier of government is not being discharged thereby contributing to ineffective or poor urban governance in the area.

It is therefore recommended that there is need for restructuring of the LGA administrative system and practice in the area to make them more functional and efficient. New department such as Planning, research and statistics to collect and keep records of the LGA should be created and developed. Similarly, the LGA does not have a department that is responsible for physical planning and control of development. Yet the LGA is constitutionally assigned this role. The need to create land use planning and control becomes absolutely essential and it is therefore recommended. The tax and rates collection system

should be organized and strengthened to make them more efficient and be able to collect more revenue for the LGA. The present practice where the LG depends almost wholly on allocation from the federation account cannot be expected to promote sustainable development of the area,

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